

CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE
ON DISARMAMENT

ENDC/PV.292
9 March 1967
ENGLISH

FINAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY-SECOND MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 9 March 1967, at 10.30 a.m.

THE UNIVERSITY
OF MICHIGAN

JUN 5 1967

DOCUMENT
COLLECTION

Chairman

U KYAW MIN

(Burma)

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PRESENT AT THE TABLE

Brazil:

Mr. A. F. AZEREDO da SILVEIRA
Mr. D. SILVEIRA da MOTA
Mr. A. da COSTA GUIMARAES
Mr. S. de QUEIROZ DUARTE

Bulgaria:

Mr. K. CHRISTOV
Mr. B. KONSTANTINOV
Mr. T. DAMJANOV
Mr. D. KOSTOV

Burma:

U KYAW MIN

Canada:

Mr. E. L. M. BURNS
Mr. S. F. RAE
Mr. C. J. WEBSTER
Mr. J. R. MORDEN

Czechoslovakia:

Mr. P. WINKLER
Mr. T. LAHODA
Mr. V. VAJNAR

Ethiopia:

Mr. A. ZELLEKE
Mr. B. ASSFAW

India:

Mr. V. C. TRIVEDI
Mr. K. P. JAIN

Italy:

Mr. F. CAVALLETTI
Mr. G. P. TOZZOLI
Mr. E. FRANCO
Mr. F. SORO

Mexico:

Mr. M. TELLO MACIAS

Nigeria:

Alhaji SULE KOLO
Mr. B. O. TONWE

PRESENT AT THE TABLE (cont'd)

Poland:

Mr. M. BLUSZTAJN
Mr. J. GOLDBLAT
Mr. E. STANIEWSKI

Romania:

Mr. N. ECOBESCO
Mr. O. IONESCO
Mr. A. COROIANU
Mr. C. MITRAN

Sweden:

Mr. A. EDELSTAM
Mr. U. ERICSSON
Mr. T. WULFF

Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics:

Mr. A. A. ROSHCHIN
Mr. O. A. GRINEVSKY
Mr. I. I. CHEPROV
Mr. V. B. TOULINOV

United Arab Republic:

Mr. H. KHALLAF
Mr. A. A. SALAM
Mr. M. SHAKER

United Kingdom:

Mr. B. J. GARNETT
Mr. R. I. T. CROMARTIE
Mr. M. R. MORLAND

United States of America:

Mr. G. BUNN
Mr. C. G. BREAM
Mr. C. GLEYSTEN
Mr. J. A. PRESEL

Special Representative of the
Secretary-General:

Mr. D. PROTITCH

Deputy Special Representative
of the Secretary-General:

Mr. W. EPSTEIN

1. The CHAIRMAN (Burma): I declare open the two hundred and ninety-second plenary meeting of the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament.
2. Alhaji SULE KOLO (Nigeria): Before dwelling on the serious and urgent challenge facing us here today, I should like to thank all those representatives who have welcomed me and my alternate to this important Committee. Although I am participating for the first time in these deliberations, none the less I have closely followed your past progress from the outside. In spite of the modest record of achievement in the field of disarmament generally, I am optimistic about the future of these talks, and I am glad of the opportunity to make my small contribution to the work of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament in forging a reliable basis for a safe world, free from the scourge of war and relieved of the threat of a nuclear deluge.
3. Our task will be difficult, but it is not impossible. We have your experience of the last five years to draw on; but we must not lose sight of the lesson of history. Twice in this century we have seen frantic efforts to bring about disarmament which failed because they were belated efforts, and, directly or indirectly, we are all witnesses of the terrible disasters which followed failure.
4. Our task here today is not different from that of our predecessors, but we have a compelling need to succeed. True, the United Nations General Assembly referred several aspects of disarmament to this Committee, but we have to determine our strategy. We must put first things first, and my delegation believes that in the present world situation an international agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons should be at the top of our agenda, although it should not become an excuse for doing nothing in the other fields.
5. Nigeria, through its successive delegations to these meetings, has always given active support to the elaboration of a non-proliferation treaty; but it would be unfair to call on any responsible government to adhere to an arrangement which did not provide fair and adequate safeguards against potential threats. Given good faith on all sides, such a guarantee arrangement should be possible. Indeed, the obligations which the non-nuclear Powers would be called upon to accept under a non-proliferation treaty presuppose that there exists, or would exist, an international situation

(Alhaji Sule Kolo, Nigeria)

inspiring confidence among States about one another's good intentions. Therefore, if we have nothing to hide we should sponsor provisions in the treaty for an international deterrent system against nuclear blackmail of any signatory of the treaty. The era of "gunboat diplomacy" may be on the wane, but we must guard against the rise of a new one, that of nuclear blackmail.

6. The political implications of a treaty apart, we have to ensure that its provisions do not prevent Member States which have the means from developing and acquiring nuclear technology for their economic, social and cultural development: and in order to ensure that any leeway given in the treaty is not abused, the inspection system must command the trust of all States parties to the treaty.

7. In this respect the countries of Latin America have shown a shining example of what can be achieved where there is political will and foresight. I should like to join previous speakers in offering my sincere congratulations to Ambassador Garcia Robles of Mexico for his outstanding contribution to the elaboration of the Treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America (ENDC/186).

8. As I indicated earlier, my delegation fully recognizes the urgency of a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We believe that this Committee should concentrate its efforts on achieving it and should resist any distractions. But it will also be conceded that a non-proliferation treaty principally imposes limitations on non-nuclear Powers. We have been told that by acquiring nuclear weapons a nation in fact increases the risk to itself of ending up in smithereens. Granted; but the same argument holds for those who already possess the deadly weapons. We may find it difficult in the present world situation to ask them to destroy all stocks. It should, however, not be unreasonable to demand that a non-proliferation treaty be matched by some restraint on nuclear testing in all environments. With such an agreement we can proceed to the other aspects of disarmament which have been referred to this Committee by the United Nations General Assembly.

9. I have tried in the foregoing to suggest conditions and a method of approach which, if adopted, would I believe facilitate the task of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament. This Committee has accepted a duty to humanity which it should perform. We must try to rise above our age and country and achieve something that will earn us the respect of posterity.

10. Mr. BURNS (Canada): What I have to say today concerns a procedural question. From various quarters concern has been expressed about the proposed prohibition in a non-proliferation treaty of nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes; and, as we have heard (ENDC/PV.287, paras. 64 et seq.), this question has also been a subject of controversy in the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of the Latin-American nuclear-free zone Treaty (ENDC/186). In fact, the problem still seems to exist in that connexion, as we can perceive from the record of our last meeting (ENDC/PV.291, para. 31).

11. In conversation yesterday among a number of colleagues, an idea was discussed which might be helpful in developing clearer understanding of some of the facts relating to the problem. We happen to have now in Geneva a number of highly-qualified scientists and other experts in nuclear technology who are here to take part in the Secretary-General's study of the effects of nuclear weapons. Now, why should not the members of this Committee take advantage of the presence of those experts to clear up obscure or disputed facts in connexion with the so-called peaceful nuclear explosions? I wonder whether it would appeal to members of the Committee, especially those who have not the advantage of being advised by highly-qualified experts of their own nationality, if an attempt were made to organize an informal gathering which would be not part of the regular meetings of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament, not recorded in our proceedings and not subject to formal records, but completely informal -- a gathering which could be attended by as many of us as feel that this problem is of particular interest. It could be between those members of the Committee and the members of the Secretary-General's expert study group who were willing to assist us in this matter.

12. I emphasize again that it would be a purely informal gathering, attended on a purely voluntary basis by those who might wish to take part in it. The idea was simply to seize the opportunity afforded by the presence of these highly-qualified experts to seek advice which some of us might desire on this particular question. If the idea were acceptable perhaps Mr. Epstein, in consultation with his colleague Mr. Vellodi, could see whether such a meeting could be arranged. I understand that, as the experts will be leaving early tomorrow, it would probably be necessary to try to arrange it at rather short notice today.

(Mr. Burns, Canada)

13. Among the questions which my delegation thinks might be put to the experts are the following:

1. Could any estimate be made of how long it will be before it will be practicable to use nuclear energy economically as an explosive for civil engineering purposes without producing unacceptable danger of radio-active fall-out or other dangerous conditions?
2. Is it possible to conceive in theory of a distinction between an explosive device which would be suitable for civil engineering, and a weapon; and on what grounds would that distinction be based?
3. Does it seem probable that research into nuclear explosion technology will yield benefits in respect of the technology of peaceful use of nuclear energy?

Those are simple suggestions, but they seem to relate to points on which there exist in the minds of some of us at the present time doubts which might be resolved in the course of an informal gathering such as I have suggested. No doubt there are other questions which those who might attend such a meeting would find it useful to put to the experts.

14. I emphasize once again that the meeting would be organized separately from both the proceedings of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and from those of the Secretary-General's study committee, but that it is something which some of my colleagues might consider useful at the present time. The Canadian delegation would be happy to hear the views of other members of the Committee or of the Secretariat on the usefulness and practicability of this idea.

15. Mr. TRIVEDI (India): I wish to intervene just for a few minutes to commend and support the suggestions made by Mr. Burns. In fact, I was thinking myself that various statements have been made in various places which, often based on some element of fact, have been oriented to mislead; and I believe it will be extremely useful if the scientists who are available now in Geneva are able to give their views on the subject.

16. I would suggest, however, that we should not like it to be a quiz programme. I dare say that that was not the intention of the representative of Canada -- to ask specific questions and get specific answers. I think that these very distinguished scientists could talk among themselves and talk to us; and, of course, if we have any queries we could certainly put those queries to them.

(Mr. Trivedi, India)

17. There is no doubt that the question of principle as well as the question of technology will be involved; they are interlinked, and both will be dealt with. For example, there is the basic issue whether it should be in the sovereign discretion of a nation to decide, for economic reasons, not to do a certain thing, or whether it should be told not to. This and other issues can be taken up. There is also the issue of expenses involved. Generally, people have been talking about the digging of canals and the building of harbours and thermo-nuclear devices; but there are other projects in which one could conceivably use fission devices under ground, say for the release of gas, and for which conventional methods are not even available.

18. In any case, these and other issues can be discussed and raised with the scientists. They can talk about present prospects and future prospects, but I would urge that they should be given full freedom to talk on the subject. They are fully aware of the dimensions of the subject and I think we should all benefit, as they would remove a lot of dead wood and a lot of misleading orientations given to certain scientific facts and assumptions.

19. The question of timing is important. If this very desirable meeting is to take place it has to be this afternoon, as many of the scientists are due to leave this very evening. If it could be arranged, I think it would be of inestimable advantage to all of us.

20. Mr. ROSHCIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translation from Russian): With all due respect we should like to point out that questions of the procedure of the Committee's work have hitherto been passed on to the co-Chairmen for preliminary examination. I think that for this reason it would be inadvisable for us to depart from the established procedure which we have always followed in solving procedural matters.

21. Therefore, if the representative of Canada means that a consultation of this kind should be conducted within the framework of the Eighteen-Nation Committee together with the group of experts, I think it would be advisable and necessary for the co-Chairmen of the Eighteen-Nation Committee to examine all aspects of this question and make an appropriate recommendation to the Committee. That seems to me to be now all the more necessary since the representative of Canada has suggested a specific programme for the consultation. He named some specific, narrowed-down questions. The representative of India, however, objected to the statement of the question as proposed by the representative of Canada.

(Mr. Roshchin, USSR)

22. In order to avoid creating any precedents for the future in regard to the organization of the work of the Committee as such, it would be undesirable for us in settling this sort of question to depart from the established procedure which has ensured, as it were, the systematic, normal and concerted activity of the Committee in examining the questions entrusted to it either by the General Assembly or by the respective Governments. The introduction of a subject which, as far as we know, has not been examined previously at government level does, of course, raise a number of questions requiring examination, in order that the Committee's activity may proceed along strictly-regulated lines, as it has done hitherto and as it must do in the future.

23. Mr. BURNS (Canada): I feel I should perhaps explain that the time factor in putting this idea forward made it necessary, if it was to be taken up at all, that it should be raised at this meeting. Regrettably, that did not allow enough time for my delegation to go through the procedures which, as the representative of the Soviet Union has pointed out and as we agree, are customary and desirable. Therefore I was only able to consult informally a limited number of delegations a short time before the meeting -- among them, of course, those of the countries whose representatives are the co-Chairmen of this Conference. I emphasized in my first remarks the very informal character of the proposed gathering and the fact that it would not be considered as a meeting of the Eighteen-Nation Committee. It would be a gathering outside our regular proceedings, and it would not be reported in the verbatim record.

24. I should like also to correct what is perhaps an impression that I suggested a concrete programme for the meeting. I put forward, as an idea, some of the questions which representatives of some countries might like to put to the experts. Perhaps no one wants to put those questions, but certainly other questions should be raised; and the representative of India indicated some of the considerations which, as I understood, he thought should be brought up in such a meeting. Obviously, if the meeting is to be informal, and not by any means a quiz programme or slanted in any direction, then suggestions for an exclusive set of questions to be examined would be out of order, and that was never intended. However, I thought that as I was making the proposal it would be useful to mention, purely as suggestions, the kind of questions which some representatives might feel it desirable to put.

(Mr. Burns, Canada)

25. I hope that what I have just said has clarified the intentions and the reason which prompted this rather informal and novel procedure in advancing this particular suggestion. I do not know whether other representatives will wish to speak on this proposal. I have been given to understand that some, at any rate, of the experts here would be prepared to meet with those representatives in the Eighteen-Nation Committee who would like to meet them for this purpose at some time after the conclusion of our present meeting. Perhaps, if nobody else wishes to offer suggestions, the Secretariat will by now have some information on what might be possible in the way of organizing such a meeting should any representatives here indicate their desire to attend it.

26. The CHAIRMAN (Burma): It appears that nobody else wishes to ~~speake~~ speak on this subject, and the situation is this. The representative of Canada has made a certain suggestion to which the representative of the Soviet Union has, I understand, raised an objection. In such matters the Chair is not competent to give a ruling.

27. Mr. BLUSZTAJN (Poland): May I suggest that we ask our co-Chairmen to consult each other, suspend this meeting for ten minutes and then meet again in order to see where we stand?

28. The CHAIRMAN (Burma): As I hear no objection to the proposal made by the representative of Poland, the meeting will be suspended for ten minutes to enable the co-Chairmen to discuss the matter.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

29. Mr. ROSHCHIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translation from Russian): In accordance with the suggestion of the representative of Poland that the co-Chairmen should consult each other on this matter, I have the honour of reporting to members of the Committee that the co-Chairmen have examined the procedural question which arose in connexion with the Committee's work.

30. The co-Chairmen of the Committee hold the view that the convening of an official or unofficial meeting within the framework of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, together with a group of experts, is not covered by the procedure of work of the Committee. Bearing in mind the procedures governing the activities of the Committee, a meeting of that kind is therefore not envisaged, nor is it to be convened either within or outside the framework of the Eighteen-Nation Committee.

31. We understood the proposal of the representative of Canada to imply that he did not envisage the convening of any meeting, official or unofficial, within the framework of the Committee. In fact, it is an initiative of the delegation of Canada which, of course, leaves each delegation free to act as it will. If any delegation wishes to consult with its experts or with a group of experts on any matters in regard to which it deems necessary and desirable to do so, that is its own personal affair.

32. Mr. BUNN (United States of America): As my co-Chairman has stated, our understanding was that Mr. Burns's proposal was simply an invitation by his delegation to anyone who wished to come to hear whatever experts might be available at the time. That is to say, no one should feel that as part of his duties as a representative in the Eighteen-Nation Committee he is under an obligation to come to such a meeting; because, as we understand the proposal, it is wholly outside the Eighteen-Nation Committee framework and would be quite informal.

33. Mr. BURNS (Canada): I take it from what has been said by our co-Chairmen that, so long as the meeting on which we have offered a suggestion was clearly understood to be outside the framework of the Eighteen-Nation Committee and purely voluntary, there would be no objection to it. It would seem now, therefore, to be a question of the practical arrangements that might be made in the light of the time that would be convenient for the experts to talk informally with any members of the Committee who, in their own judgement and quite apart from any responsibilities to attend formal meetings of the Eighteen-Nation Committee, should decide that they would like to take advantage of the opportunity offered.

(Mr. Burns, Canada)

34. I believe that that is in accordance with the views expressed by our co-Chairmen. I think that perhaps the next step would be for us to hear -- possibly from the Secretariat -- whether or not it will be feasible for some or all of the experts to be available, and at what time, so that those of us who might like to talk to them could have that information on which to base the decision whether or not to attend.

35. The CHAIRMAN (Burma): I think we can now request the Secretariat to see if an informal gathering such as that suggested by the delegation of Canada can be arranged, on the understanding that it will be completely outside the framework of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament and that attendance will be on a strictly voluntary basis. Is it agreed that I should ask the Secretariat to try to arrange the voluntary gathering proposed by the delegation of Canada?

It was so agreed.

The Conference decided to issue the following communiqué:

"The Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament today held its 292nd plenary meeting in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, under the Chairmanship of U Kyaw Min, representative of Burma.

"Statements were made by the representatives of Nigeria, Canada, India, the Soviet Union, Poland and the United States of America.

"The next meeting of the Conference will be held on Tuesday, 14 March 1967, at 10.30 a.m."

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.